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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: FUTURE LEADERS EXPRESS VIEWS ON FOREIGN
POLICY

1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

2. (SBU) SUMMARY: On March 19, the Ambassador hosted 10 future Kazakhstani leaders who are alumni of the Marshall Center. The alumni, who represented at least five government ministries and agencies, asked the Ambassador questions on topics ranging from his personal background to bilateral issues and foreign policy under the new Obama administration. The participants were particularly interested in the global financial crisis. On the margins of the event, the Kazakhstanis shared reactions from their Marshall Center training experiences. END SUMMARY.

3. (SBU) The Ambassador hosted a reception attended by ten Kazakhstani graduates of the George Marshall Center's Program in Advanced Security Studies (PASS) on March 19. The Kazakhstani alumni, all of whom were in their late 20s and 30s, represented the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Ministry of Defense (MOD), Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), Ministry of Justice (MOJ), and Procurator General's Office (PGO). Although the Marshall Center offers PASS courses in both English and Russian, almost all of the attendees spoke at least a little bit of English. However, the bulk of the conversation at the reception, including side informal conversation and a group discussion with the Ambassador, was in Russian.

4. (SBU) The young Kazakhstanis showed confidence in asking questions of the Ambassador, but also demonstrated a sincere interest in understanding the U.S. perspective on many key issues in international relations. The questions they put to the Ambassador varied widely, but, as is part of the cultural norm in Kazakhstan, a group discussion with him began with their asking personal questions, such as about how he became interested in Central Asia. The tenor of questions changed quickly to more serious and potentially controversial topics, when Baurzhan Tauassarov, a Third Secretary from the MFA's Multilateral Cooperation Department, asked about the future U.S. approach toward Afghanistan. Tauassarov said that the government of Kazakhstan is very concerned about instability in Afghanistan, and particularly the narcotics trafficking that flourishes when stability cannot be maintained. He brought this issue to a personal level, stating openly that "even some of my friends have been lost to drug addiction."

15. (SBU) In a private conversation during the event, Tauassarov told PolOff that the most critical issue for Kazakhstan, in his opinion, is weathering the global financial crisis. He remarked, "In Kazakhstan, we think the worst is yet to come, even though the crisis has already hit many people, as well as our government, very hard." In fact, the majority of questions raised by the Kazakhstanis focused on economic issue. One raised several questions about the U.S. view of President Nazarbayev's proposal for a single global currency.

16. (SBU) Aside from economics, questions the Kazakhstanis posed to the Ambassador ranged from how U.S. foreign policy would change under the Obama administration to why and how the U.S. promotes democracy. One asked, "How do you think the change of the U.S. Administration will affect the U.S. approach to other countries?" Another thanked the Ambassador for his recent speech on democracy, and said, "It appears that your speech was very sincere. Why did you decide to make a speech and give an interview on democracy in Kazakhstan?" Many of the questions indicated a subtle appreciation of international politics, with one participant, for example, asking the Ambassador, "We know that part of your job in Kazakhstan is to advocate for the U.S. point of view. Do you advocate for Kazakhstan within Washington as well?" A participant who works on NATO affairs for the MFA's Department of Multilateral Cooperation asked if Secretary Clinton will visit Kazakhstan in the near future.

16. (SBU) Overall, the event was a perfect melding of traditional and public diplomacy. It allowed Embassy officials to explain U.S. policies in a private atmosphere to a very sophisticated and influential young audience, and to develop a wide-range of new contacts. The event was also useful in promoting connections among

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the Kazakhstani participants themselves. One of the participants commented that the event was an excellent way for the Kazakhstanis to network with others they had not met before, even though they had all attended PASS training within the last few years.

17. (SBU) These future Kazakhstani "movers-and-shakers" also willingly shared some interesting reactions from their training opportunities. The MFA's Tauassarov is an ethnic Kazakh graduate of an Almaty law school who is working on coordination with the United Nations. During his first visit to the United States, which took place in conjunction with his Marshall Center training in Germany, Tauassarov told PolOff in all seriousness that he was most impressed with Halloween. The freedom with which Americans celebrated this holiday, Tauassarov said, represented "real democracy." Manar Ussenova, from the Cultural Affairs Section of the MFA's Department of Multilateral Cooperation, said that she had been most struck, during her Marshall Center training program, by how many other countries are struggling to cope with terrible problems centered on religious differences, and emphasized her view that one of Kazakhstan's priorities should be maintaining its moderate stance on religion. The Marshall Center has provided excellent training opportunities for Kazakhstan's future leaders, and the Embassy looks forward to continuing to work closely with the Marshall Center.

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